

# Dateline DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

## Web Site Focuses On Health Disparities

In a concerted effort to broaden the awareness of health care disparities in Maryland, the Department launched a new Web site that provides information and resources related to the issue.



The Web site, active since mid-March, is located at [www.dhmh.state.md.us/hd](http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/hd). The topics on the site include local and national data that reflect the disparity problem, information resources, a list of State disparity programs and available funding opportunities.

Health disparities — created when disease and mortality affects some communities at a higher rate than others — is an issue that affects the nation as a whole. Maryland has made some gains, but generally mirrors the rest of the country.

In Maryland, conditions such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS impact the State's ethnic communities at a greater rate. These communities include African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Asian

Americans and Native Americans.

Infant and maternal mortality are considered to be key indicators of a population's health. In Maryland, the infant mortality rate among African Americans is more than double that of Caucasians and is higher than any other racial or ethnic group. It is a comparable situation for maternal mortality, where the rate of death among African Americans is more than twice that for Caucasians.

Similar trends are seen in men, where the rate of death from prostate cancer among Maryland African Americans is more than double that for Caucasians.

The human and economic impact created by health disparities is great. People suffer at a younger age and often die earlier. Disparities drive up the costs of care at every level in the health care system, including Medicaid.

Access to care and early detection are crucial elements to narrowing the gap.

Currently, numerous health care programs within DHMH work with Maryland's local health departments to target minorities by offering education, prevention, screening, and treatment services.

In addition, the Department is working with representatives from academia, health professions, hospitals and community

groups to develop a Health Disparities Reduction Plan. DHMH also plans to establish an Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities. In part, this office will seek federal and foundation funds so grants can be issued to community groups that have developed well-defined plans and have extensive working partnerships in their communities. The office will also work to better define the issue through increased data collection. This will enable a more accurate evaluation of the problem and lead to the development of additional appropriate programs.



*Dr. Julie Casani used a 'Jeopardy' format to impart information during February's Bioterrorism Speakers Series presentation. This month's speaker is James R. Stanton, M.S.W., program director for Weapons of Mass Destruction Counterterrorism at the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems. It will be held on April 20, from Noon to 1:00 p.m. in Room L-3 of the O'Connor Building.*

## Immunize Your Children

Vaccines are among the most successful public health tools for preventing disease and death, but some parents have fears or misconceptions about the safety or necessity of immunization.

While 'getting shots' isn't fun for the more than 70,000 babies born every year in Maryland, that momentary pain can ensure children a lifetime of protection from serious diseases.

This year's recognition of **National Infant Immunization Week**, April 25 - May 1, highlights the positive impact of immunization and is designed to reassure parents that vaccines are safe, effective and essential for good public health.

This is due to advances in medical research and ongoing review by doctors, researchers, and public health officials. Vaccines must meet strict safety standards set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and each vaccine's safety is monitored by the FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Vaccines do carry some element of risk, but serious side effects are very rare. In fact, any risk posed by vaccines today is less than the complications from the diseases they prevent. Side effects are generally soreness or tenderness at the injection site and/or a low-grade fever.

The FDA and CDC work together to track and investigate all reports of serious adverse reactions to vaccines. The vast majority of reported events have been found

to be unrelated to vaccines.

Immunizations protect not only the toddler, but families and communities as well. Disease-causing viruses and bacteria still circulate — either at low levels in the United States or in other countries. Those not found in the U.S. are only a plane or boat ride away, and children who have not been immunized may become infected and contribute to the spread or resurfacing of a disease.

During National Infant Immunization Week, DHMH reminds parents that one of the best things they can do is to make sure their toddlers are vaccinated on schedule — which means nine vaccinations by the age of two.

Parents who have questions about immunization should ask their child's pediatrician, or contact Barbara Alexander or Kelly Edmund in the DHMH Center for Immunization at 410-767-6679.

*Editor's Note: Thanks to Tara Snyder, Community Health Educator in the Center of Health Promotion, Education and Tobacco Use Prevention, for writing this article.*

## Please remember . . .

DGS Security will stop employees who exit DGS-controlled buildings with State property. Employees without property passes will not be allowed to take equipment out of the building. State employees are required to have two State property passes, signed by a supervisor, prior to exiting DGS facilities with State-owned property.

## And, Don't Forget . . .

Dateline DHMH is available on the DHMH Web site at [www.dhmh.state.md.us/publ-rel/dateline/dateline.htm](http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/publ-rel/dateline/dateline.htm).

Please take a look at the on-line site and see a slightly different version of the newsletter. Color has been added to most of the artwork, including some of the photographs. Please let us know if you like this new on-line look. Contact us by e-mail at [hammondj@dhmh.state.md.us](mailto:hammondj@dhmh.state.md.us).

**Thanks!**



*Dr. Gaynell Colburn entertained school children and all those who attended **DHMH's Black History Month Celebration** on February 18. Dr. Colburn is the 1998 ESSENCE Award recipient, a world-class motivational speaker and wellness consultant.*

## Calendar of Events

Sunday, April 4 - Saturday, April - 10 **Public Health Week.** Check with your local health department for a list of activities that may be scheduled.

Tuesday, April 13 — *workshop:* **Transforming Conflict into Cooperation: Social Work Applications of the Community Conferencing Process;** University of Maryland School of Social Work; 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.; \$125. Approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information.

Thursday, April 15 — *workshop:* **The Chronic Disease Model of Addiction: Nuts and Bolts for Clinicians;** University of Maryland School of Social Work; 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.; \$125. Approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information.

Monday, April 19 — *kickoff:* **National Laboratory Week,** O'Connor Building lobby; 10:00 a.m. This year's theme is "Laboratory Professionals Leading the Way to a Healthier You!"

April 20 — *presentation:* **Bioterrorism Speakers Series;** O'Connor Building Lobby Conference Room L-3; 12 Noon - 1:00 p.m. Guest speaker is James R. Stanton, M.S.W., program director for Weapons of Mass Destruction Counterterrorism at the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems. Sponsored by the DHMH Training Services Division. Phone 410-931-1239 for more information.

Tuesday, April 20 — *workshop:* **Stress Management Techniques in Clinical Practice: Restoring Clients and Ourselves;** University of Maryland School of Social Work; 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.; \$125. Approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information.

Tuesday and Wednesday, April 20 - 21 — **Blood Drive,** 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. O'Connor Building lobby. Call Stephanie Brown at 410-767-6403 for more information or to reserve a time.

Thursday, April 22 — *workshop:* **Depression Among Women and its Impact on Parenting: Assessment and Intervention;** University of Maryland School of Social Work; 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.; \$125. Approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information.

Saturday, April 24 — **Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day,** Mt. Olive A.M.E. Church, Chestertown; 8:30 a.m. - 12 Noon. Phone 410-778-1350 for more information.

Sunday, May 2 — **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Walk;** Centennial Park in Howard County; check-in: 10:00 a.m., walk: 11:00 a.m. Co-sponsored by the Mental Hygiene Administration. Call Jean Smith at 410-402-7517 for more information.



### *Congratulations to . . .*

*Mary C. Burke, chair of the Board of Social Work Examiners, who was awarded the Sunny Andrews Award for Outstanding Regulatory Board Service. This national award was presented at the November annual meeting of the Association of Social Work Boards in Colorado Springs.*

## New Year's Resolutions Revisited

Think back to those cold, dark days of January — and that resolution you made to eat better and become more active. Even though you were fully prepared to follow through, chances are your pledge never made it past the paper stage.

*But here is your second chance!*

Spring is here and now is a great opportunity to put that physical activity resolution into practice. Plus, the local growing season is fast approaching — a terrific time to increase your fruit and vegetable intake.



Start your activity by walking — this will help you ease into more active pursuits later in the season.

*Continued*



## Resolutions

*Continued*

Walk 15 minutes at lunch and again after dinner and you'll obtain the 30 minutes of moderate activity recommended by the U.S. Surgeon General. It's easier than you think —daylight savings time is around the corner and longer daylight hours mean more time to be outside. And remember — stay challenged and interested by updating your routine periodically.



Next, make an easy move toward increasing your fruit and vegetable intake. Buy a few pieces of fruit the next time you are at the grocery store and bring it to work. You'll have tasty snacks available for several days that are even more convenient than vending machine snacks. Add a fruit or vegetable juice at breakfast, a big salad for lunch, and a casserole with plenty of beans and vegetables for dinner and you can easily reach five servings for the day.

Don't think you can handle too many changes at one time? Then take one step at a time.

Not ready to adjust your diet? Start walking first and make that a habit before you try another change.

Can't take up walking right now? Start a community garden or plant your own and reap the benefits of fresh vegetables while getting extra activity on the side.

To learn more about the benefits of physical activity and a healthy diet, visit the CDC Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity Web site at [www.cdc.gov/nccdp/hp/dnpa/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdp/hp/dnpa/index.htm).

*Editor's Note: Thanks to the staff in the Family Health Administration's Division of Cardiovascular Health and Nutrition for writing this article.*

## *Celebrate!!*

April is

## National Minority Health Month

### Training Services Partners with CCBC

The Training Services Division's (TSD) recent move to the White Marsh area is part of a recent partnership entered into between DHMH and the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC).

TSD, which heads up the Department's training in bio-terrorism response, will tap into the professional training resources and expertise of CCBC's School of Justice and the School of Health Professions. Both are based in eastern Baltimore County.

"CCBC has the physical, training and technological resources to help us maximize our statewide response pre-paration in the critical area of bio-terrorism," said Secretary Nelson J. Sabatini. "Additionally, the statewide presence of the Community Colleges supports our outreach training efforts through a network of training providers."

It is hoped the program will serve as a model for future partnerships between the college and other

statewide providers of training services.

"It makes great sense for us to team up to strengthen the workforce training options available to the state's employees," said CCBC chancellor Dr. Irving Pressley McPhail. "Together we can build a stronger workforce that can readily anticipate and respond to whatever public safety or health challenges come our way."

TSD moved to CCBC's White Marsh training facility in January. CCBC will also provide office and classroom space on its nearby Essex campus.

**Please note:** There is a new general phone number to reach TSD at its White Marsh location. It is 410-931-1513. The division's fax number is 410-933-2028.



STATE OF MARYLAND

# DHMH

### **Dateline DHMH**

*A publication of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Public Relations*

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